

'honest lands, slaying the Penn lords
in open fight, and, often, the ladies
ladies & children in cold blood.

Then Hereward heard these things, he
knew that his home had need of him;
he thought of his mother, now a widow, &
of the little lad, his brother: so he crossed
the sea once more, &, all alone & at
nightfall, drew nigh to his old home
of Bourne.

The hall was all ablaze with many
candles as if a great feast were ~~to be~~
forward, & mad drunken Thugs came
from within: but what is that struck left
on the Gate? It is the beautiful head of
his own young brother, with the long
golden hair all dabbled in blood.
Hereward went in, & found his father's
Hall full of drinking Normans: they
rose to fall upon him, and, as they
came, he slew them, man by man,
until none was left to tell the tale.
Then he went above, & found his mother
sitting with white face, by the side of her
headless boy: very thankful was she to
see Hereward again to look her estates over
of her, & very thankful was her son to
have his mother's blessing after the long
years of his outlawry.

Though he had slain the Normans, no
place of Bourne was no place for the deadly
forsaken, so Hereward took boat & carried
her to Crowland Hall, to the dear Abby

Then he split the war arrow into four
I sent round the four pieces north, south,
east, west, to all the men of the Fens; if
the Master were not at home, the arrow was
left sticking in his door, or in his
big chair by the fire, for him to pass
on to his neighbour when he comes. By
this arrow, the Fen-men knew they
were called to battle with the Romans;
and all the folk of the men seemed to
cry to them that Hereward was
come to be their leader.

Meantime, Hereward went over sea again
to bring ship loads of North-men to their
aid; but the Conqueror was too wise for
the North-men & they were beaten back.
They could not take ship again without pay
however; so they set their hearts on the gold
in the Golden Burgh. Once again their
terrible "Yuck-hey-sa sa sa!" was
heard by the monks of Peterborough as
the Norse-men rowed up the Trent, & once
again a terrible time of burning &
slaying followed that wild war cry.

Then they all, Danes & English, came
to Ely Isle, & after a long council in
the great hall, it was settled that the
Danes should go back to their own land.
Hereward went to the top of the Minster tower,

and watched the fire-lighting with committal,
over as they went. And when they were
all out of sight, he went back, & lay down
in his bed except once or twice for all, for
indeed, they were in very evil case.

When William heard that the Danes
were gone, he marched upon Ely; as he
came from Cambridge, he could see the
Minster towers rising from among
the trees, & doubtless he thought that
Ely would be an easy conquest. But
men told him that between him &
those trees lay a black abyss of mud
& peat & reed, with the deep sullen
water winding through it. The narrowest
space between dry land & dry land
was a full half mile. & how to cross
that half mile, no man knew.

On the west; what was there? a wilderness
of moors, seas, & floating alder beds.
Through which the few men alone
could wade with leaping pole & log
canoe. On the east, again, were mere,
& fens, & these waters, broader & deeper
than before, because these had been
joined by the Cam.

So William's host - camped themselves
in Killingham field; & down the bridge-
way, poured the men, bearing timber
& hafers, out from the hills, that they
might bridge the black half mile, for that
after

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• after all seemed the only way by which
they could get upon the island.

They tried to drive piles, but the piles
would not hold; so they made a floating
bridge with long beams, & lumps of cattle
hides to float them.

At last, the bridge was finished, &
floated safe across the river, so that
the English on the island could touch
it with a long pole. They would have
destroyed it, but Hereward had been
left it alone; he knew what would happen.

And now came along the bridge a
dark column of men in glittering helmets,
bright & polished. They came; they
pushed along the bridge - a more & more
crowded mass; men fell off into
the mire & water. Still, on they came
in thousands, & fresh thousands
followed; but they were not yet at ^{the} end.
The bridge strained more & more, parted
one side - way rolled it gave, & then,
turning over, cast into that foul
stream the flower of Norman chivalry,
leaving a line - a full quarter of a mile
in length - of wreathes drowning in
the dark water, or in the bottomless
slime of peat & mud.

William, they say, struck his tent &
departed forthwith, groaning from deep
pries of heart; & so ended the first battle

of Aldreth.

So Ely became a camp of refuge for Hereward & his men for many a month. With the numberless wild fowl of the marshes, & the fish of the rivers & the cattle they managed to bring in from time to time, they did not fare badly upon Ely. Still, it was dull work, shut up in that marshy island: they made many a raid upon the Normans, but were never strong enough for a great fight, & then on many tales of how Hereward, his loved adventure, went forth to explore at the risk of his life.

The next summer, William came to Aldreth again, or, rather, to Willingham; this time he had piles driven into the black ooze to make a causeway broad & strong for his men; & he had a strong, strong bridge made to carry them over Anse, & the Normans swarmed upon causeway & bridge as before, & this time the English in Aldreth lost night & all trouble.

But see, - what is that? a puff of smoke, a wisp of flame, & then, another & another; and a canoe shot out from among the reeds on the Willingham side & plied into the reeds of the island. The English saw yet the reeds on fire about the Norman fort.

As came the flames, leaping & crackling, caught

Camping & sheltering like a line of men). It reached the causeway, spreading over the road of the mass of men: the timbers of the bridge caught fire beneath their feet. They sprang from the burning foot-way, & plunged into the pathless bog.

The next day, William withdrew his army. The men refused to face again that blood-stained pass.

This was how the men of the fens held out against a foreign foe. But it was all in vain; they did not know when they were beaten.

In full seven years did Hereward hold this camp of refuge. Through times few hard a food was scarce. At last, the months of Ely, weary of such a life, played their own people false & let the Normans in by stealth.

Hereward & his English got out of Ely, but would not yet give up hope of the English cause: they took to the fenwood, & lived on the tall deer in the great forest which stretched up in those days west of Bowes.

But the day came when Hereward knew he was the last man in England to hold out against the conqueror. That it was now was to struggle on,

Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
 "Forward the light Brigade!"
 No man was there dismayed;
 Not though the soldier knew
 Some one had blundered:
 Theirs not to make reply,
 Theirs not to reason why,
 Theirs but to do and die;
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them
 Cannon to left of them;
 Cannon in front of them,
 Volley'd and thunder'd.
 Storm'd at with shot & shell,
 Boldly they rode and well,
 Into the jaws of death -
 Into the mouth of hell -
 Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,
 Flashed all at once in air,
 Charging the gunners there;
 Charging an army, while
 All the world wondered;
 Plunged in the battery smoke,
 With many a desperate stroke,
 The Russian line they broke,
 Then they rode back, but not -
 Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon behind them,
 Volley'd & thunder'd.